



# City of Port Moody

## Governance and Legislation Committee

Date: March 19, 2024  
Submitted by: General Manager of Community Development  
Subject: Advisory Design Panel Form and Function

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### Purpose

To review the Terms of Reference of the Advisory Design Panel and consider adjustments to the form and function of this committee.

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### Recommended Resolution(s)

**THAT staff adjust the Advisory Design Panel Terms of Reference as directed by Council and that staff bring the updated terms of reference to a future Council meeting for approval as recommended in the report dated March 19, 2024, from the General Manager of Community Development regarding the Advisory Design Panel Form and Function.**

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### Background

Council directed staff to bring the Terms of Reference for the Advisory Design Panel to a Governance and Legislation Committee meeting for revision/discussion.

### Discussion

#### Purpose of an Advisory Design Panel

The purpose of an Advisory Design Panel (ADP) is to provide professional review and recommendations on various design elements related to development permit applications. As most municipalities historically have not had staff with backgrounds in larger scale architecture, landscape architecture or other specialty design fields, ADPs were established as a way for municipalities to receive design input as part of the development review process.

ADPs are typically composed of design professionals, generally referred to municipalities from their professional or governing associations. When additional members are identified that are not part of a governing association, City staff need to recruit the other members. ADP members participate as unpaid volunteers. The ADP composition is intended to complement the staff reviews bringing a technical expertise that the City does not employ. Many municipalities including Port Moody also receive architecture and landscape architecture design review through contracted services. These reviews are conducted on a fee for service basis and are included in the fees paid to the City when a development permit (DP) application is submitted.

Some municipalities have transitioned solely to contracted service design review and/or in house expertise, and others take a blended approach of staff review, contracted service design review, and advisory design panel review. One of the reasons some municipalities have moved to solely contracted service design review is due to the challenges filling ADP positions and staff time spent recruiting for Panel members and administering the review meetings.

### Current ADP Composition

The current ADP terms of reference (TOR) (**Attachment 1**) provide for nine professional volunteer members, plus support by staff from the Community Development, Legislative Services and Police Departments. To help ensure continuity on the Panel, the nine members serve based on staggered two-year terms. The current ADP TOR membership includes:

- Two Architects (AIBC);
- Two Registered Landscape Architects (LA);
- One Professional Engineer (P. Eng.), ideally with a traffic background;
- One Registered Professional Biologist (R.P. Bio.) or Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP);
- One Registered Energy Advisor or a professional with a background in sustainability;
- One professional representative with a background in visual arts or urban design; and
- One professional representative with in-depth knowledge of adaptable and accessible design.

### Current ADP Focus

The current ADP TOR outlines the focus of the review Council would like the ADP to conduct. This review focuses on adherence to relevant Official Community Plan Design Guidelines and other relevant policies. The primary focus of the ADP review includes:

- Architectural Distinction – is this building based on a compellingly original visual concept? Would it make a striking contribution to residents' visual experience of Port Moody as an exciting City of the Arts? Factors to consider include building massing and proportionality, articulation, distinctive materials, character/personality, height, roof forms, and overall impact to streetscape and/or skyline;
- Urban Design – neighbourhood context, the impact on adjacent buildings, streets, and land uses; contribution to the quality of public space; and building/street interface and transition;
- Site Planning – topography of the site; daylight, shadowing, overlook, and privacy issues; lot coverage; setbacks; provision of parking/loading; site access and permeability; and adherence to CPTED principles;
- Landscaping – extent of hard versus soft landscaping; suitability of proposed planting, irrigation strategy; and accommodation of outdoor amenity areas;
- Environment – impact of development upon natural elements, including topography, steep slopes, ravines, watercourses, and tree retention;
- Sustainability and Climate Resiliency – assessing the use of sustainable construction materials, low carbon heating and cooling systems, and implementation of practices that minimize energy use, water use, etc.; and
- Accessibility and inclusion – does the project provide options for people of all ages and abilities.

## Challenges

*Recruitment and Composition* – For the past several years the City has been challenged with recruiting the TOR specified design professionals and achieving meeting quorum. As ADP appointments are for two-year staggered terms, annually, staff reach out to professional organizations requesting new ADP volunteers as well administering other recruitment processes. While some members have renewed their two-year terms bringing continuity to the panel, others for various personal reasons have needed to tender their resignations mid-term. This high turn over has left vacancies on the ADP and challenged the performance of the committee. Some professional organizations include participation on an ADP as part of professional development, but others do not. As a result, the availability and time some professionals are available to participate on the ADP is very limited. Indicative of these recruiting difficulties, the ADP presently has only seven of nine member positions filled.

*Staff Support* – Recruiting for the ADP is an ongoing process that demands dedicated staff time. Often this takes multiple requests to fill the required positions and address mid-term vacancies. Seeking out new members through their related professional associations (i.e., for the architect, landscape architect and engineer positions) can be relatively straightforward, but finding professionals in other specified areas of expertise outlined in the ADP TOR has proven challenging due to the absence of a specific or pertinent professional association to contact. Additionally, staff time is required to assist the Chair in organizing meetings, facilitating panel questions, and effectively articulating panel comments into resolutions efficiently.

*Review Focus* – As noted above, the ADP TOR defines seven topics to guide the panel review. Each topic lists a broad range of elements that can be considered within the topic area. While such a broad range of elements included in each topic area can foster interesting conversations, it can also lead to a lack of clarity regarding the plan elements that are most critical for the panel to comment on. Lengthy application reviews can also ensue resulting in each application requiring a full meeting to complete the review.

*Timing of the ADP Review* – The ADP TOR prescribes that applications are referred to the ADP while applications are being reviewed by staff. As a result, the ADP does not have an opportunity to see a fulsome list of items the staff is commenting on prior to examining an application. This timing issue leads to situations where the ADP might spend extended periods discussing items that staff has already flagged or will be flagging for the applicant.

## Options for Consideration

*1. Adjust the ADP Member Composition* – While various perspectives are welcome and encouraged through the development application review process, some of the identified membership positions are very challenging to fill as there is no direct professional association that can facilitate a pool of candidates. In addition, some of the membership categories identified cross into the areas of expertise of other members.

Options: If Council would like to adjust the composition of the ADP, consideration could be given to amending the following positions that do not directly link to a professional association and can be challenging to fill - accessibility/inclusionary design and visual arts. These review areas are critical to the design process but can be accomplished through alternate means. Often both the Architecture and Landscape Architecture

positions can make some comment on these areas. Council could also amend the panel to require a minimum of five design professionals composed of two architects, one landscape architect and two other design professionals from the following list engineering, environment, urban design, and building energy. A second landscape architect could also be included on this list.

*2. Increase the Required Professional Reviews* – The City already requires third party professional reviews from an Architect and a Landscape Architect. The City could increase the number of required professional reviews to capture key area where Council would like to receive a more detailed analysis. This approach would allow the City to establish a contract with a professional who works in the desired subject area on a fee for service basis. The City would facilitate the review and recover the fee as a charge to the applicant. A contracted professional would result in a more thorough review for the City and more detailed comments to the applicant.

Options: If Council would like to increase the number of professional reviews received through contracted services, consideration could be given to adding the following additional professional reviews: an accessibility and inclusion review, an urban design review and/or an energy advisory review.

*3. Adjust the ADP Focus* – The current ADP TOR focus is broad and crosses reviews that are conducted by other committees, other design professionals and staff. The TOR could provide a narrowed focus for the ADP review, focussing on design areas where the Panel's expertise is strongest, or a second opinion would be an asset. Other areas of consideration and review for the DP applications could be advanced via the design expertise that the City employs which includes engineering (civil and transportation), sustainability and climate action, environment, parks, housing, economic development, social planning, development planning, building, arts, and culture. Staff from all these service areas are actively involved in reviewing development applications. As noted above, the City also contracts for Architecture and Landscape Architecture services. The accessibility and inclusivity focus area and the urban design focus area are generally reviewed by staff and contracted service providers, but there is no specific professional conducting a review from this perspective.

Options: If Council would like to amend the focus areas for ADP review, Council could consider re-organizing the review criteria into primary and secondary review elements and that the TOR include a guided referral to the panel from staff outlining the key areas that the panel should be addressing when commenting on the application. This referral process will focus the panel review on areas where staff sees the need for more design expertise and/or another opinion.

*4. Change the Application Referral Criteria* – The ADP TOR does not specify which applications will be referred to the ADP for review. Historically small-lot and other staff delegated development permit applications have not been referred to the ADP, but all other multi-unit or mixed-use development permit applications are referred. Considering various actions being taken to address the Provincial Housing crisis, criteria could be established to streamline the applications referred to the ADP. This streamlining approach could assist in expediting

application processing time. The TOR could be amended to include threshold-based exemptions based on building types and sizes.

Options: If Council would like to amend the types of applications reviewed by the ADP, Council could consider the following application criteria:

- 1) Applications where the architecture or other design elements are not supported by staff or the contracted Architecture or Landscape Architecture review;
- 2) Applications greater than six storeys in height and/or with a FAR greater than 3.0;
- 3) Applications that require an OCP amendment; and
- 4) Applications that require a zoning amendment and are not prohibited from holding a public hearing.

*5. Change the ADP Review Format* – The current ADP format includes a formal meeting schedule, with a structure that involves presentations from both staff and the applicant. After these presentations, the ADP asks questions of the applicant and then formulates a recommendation resolution to forward to Council for consideration. An alternative approach could involve the ADP providing written comments instead of offering comments in a formal meeting. This alternate approach would allow the Panel members greater flexibility in finding a time to provide the requested feedback and it could address past challenges of achieving meeting quorum or not having enough time to review multiple applications in one meeting. A comments form could be prepared to guide the written comments process. However, even with prepared materials this approach would most likely not provide the Panel with the same context as formulating their recommendations collectively at a meeting. This approach may also result in an increased time commitment for Panel members. The effectiveness of this approach is unknown.

Options – Staff have concerns with this approach, but If Council would like to amend the Panel review format, Council could consider a one-year trial whereby Panel members provide written comments. The Panel members would be provided similar materials similar to those received prior to a meeting including a presentation slide deck from the applicant, the site plans, and a staff report. A review form could be created to streamline each Panel members review. For each referred application, a due date would be established by which the Panel member would submit their comment form. Comment forms would be summarized and included in the DP report to Council.

#### Staff Recommended Changes to the ADP TOR

Staff recommends that the ADP TOR be amended to adjust the Panel member composition (option 1), adjust the Panel focus (option 3), and change the Panel referral criteria (option 4) as outlined above. Staff also recommends that an accessibility and inclusionary design review be added to the required contracted professional review services (part of option 2).

#### Other Option(s)

1. Affirm the current ADP TOR.
2. Disband the ADP.

## Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

## Communications and Public Engagement Initiatives

There are no communications and engagement initiatives associated with this report. Once direction is received staff will follow up with the current members of the Advisory Design Panel

## Council Strategic Plan Goals

The recommendations in this report align with the following Council Strategic Plan Goal(s):

- Strategic Goal 1.3 – Lead with Good Governance.

## Attachment(s)

1. Terms of Reference – Advisory Design Panel

## Report Author

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## Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Review of the Advisory Design Panel Form and Function.docx
Attachments:	- Attachment 1 - Terms of Reference - Advisory Design Panel.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Mar 11, 2024

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Stephanie Lam, City Clerk and Manager of Legislative Services - Mar 7, 2024

Lindsay Todd, Manager of Communications and Engagement - Mar 7, 2024

Paul Rockwood, General Manager of Finance and Technology - Mar 9, 2024

Anna Mathewson, City Manager - Mar 11, 2024